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LCPI WORK AT LAKE CHAMPLAIN, 1987

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INTRODUCTION

The year 1987 marked a new era in underwater exploration technology for the Lake Champlain Phenomena Investigation (LCPI) in its search for "Champ," the 15–25-foot-long animals said to inhabit Lake Champlain. The more conventional forms of searching for these supposed animals—deploying surface surveillance with cameras and binoculars/telescopes, scuba searches, and night-scope surveillance—were again used by LCPI during 1987. However, more sophisticated equipment, including side-scan sonar, an underwater robot called Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV), and a video digitizer monitoring system were also employed at the 400-foot-deep and 109-mile-long Lake Champlain, located in Vermont, New York, and Quebec. This report serves as an update on LCPI's ongoing fieldwork; it also reviews the recorded 1987 Champ sightings.

The 30 days of LCPI fieldwork during 1987 were primarily directed at: (1) side-scan sonar surveys searching for a possible Champ carcass lying on the lake bottom, or a mid-water Champ target; (2) eyeballing any sonar-discovered bottom targets indicating a possible Champ carcass, and searching underwater dropoffs using the ROV; (3) conducting the first field tests of an experimental video digitizer monitoring system designed to observe the lake's surface and to activate a video recorder when unusual surface movement is detected; (4) daylight surface surveillance with cameras and binoculars/telescope from boat and shore-based sites; (5) underwater searches using scuba divers; (6) further documentation, analysis, and publication of reported Champ sightings; (7) encouraging residents and visitors at Lake Champlain to carry cameras to possibly get photographic documentation on Champ; and (8) providing assistance to serious individuals and groups involved in Champ-related research and fieldwork.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The LCPI conducted 30 days of fieldwork at Lake Champlain during 1987. Donated equipment came from Klein Associates, Inc., Salem, New Hampshire; Kaselaan & D'Angelo Associates, Inc., Haddon Heights, New Jersey; Vermont Dive Charter, Jericho, Vermont; and Susan Schmidt, New York City. Klein Associates, Inc. provided a Klein 500 kHz and 100 kHz side-scan sonar. Garry Kozak, Manager, Field Operations, Klein Associates, Inc.,

acted as our primary side-scan sonar operator. Kaselaan & D'Angelo Associates, Inc. provided a Minirover Mk II ROV, equipped with a VHS video camera and a manipulator arm for object retrieval. The ROV has 500 feet of umbilical cable, giving us an ability to reach any depth in the lake (Fig. 1). Vincent Capone, Division Manager, Marine & Aquatic Sciences, Kaselaan & D'Angelo Associates, Inc., and Chip D'Angelo, President of Kaselaan & D'Angelo Associates, Inc., were present as ROV operators and also as part of the LCPI scuba team. Captain Rafael Veve of Vermont Dive Charter donated the use of his 28-foot-long vessel, the *Neptune Star*. John Becker donated an ImageWise video digitizer, an Atari 1040ST computer, and a Panasonic surveillance camera. Susan Schmidt donated night-scope gear for low visibility surveillance. M. Patram Meaney and Joseph W. Zarzynski donated various camera and video gear, including a Magnavox surveillance camera and monitor, and a Panasonic video recorder for the video digitizer monitoring system.

Zarzynski participated in all 30 days of LCPI fieldwork. Others participated on the following date(s): M. Patram Meaney (April 11; June 25–30; July 1–3, 18; August 5–14), Vincent Capone (June 26–28; August 7–9), Chip D'Angelo (August 7–9), Garry Kozak (June 26–28; August 7–9), Donald Mayland (June 26–28; July 2; August 7–9), Russell Bellico (July 15, 26; August 7, 12, 18), John Becker and Ted Straiton (August 1–4; October 3), Bruce Hallenbeck (August 1–3), Captain Rafael Veve (June 26–28; August 8–9), Captain Dan Couture (August 7, 18), Jim Rock (August 7), Paxti Pastor (August 8–9), Willie Veve (August 9), Jack Sullivan (August 18), David Pitkin, Ken Bartowski, and Karen Lichter (October 3), and various people during a public "Champ watch" aboard the vessel *The Spirit of Ethan Allen* (July 27).

Special thanks go to Richard Smith and Eugene Lepeschkin for bringing to my attention some previously unrecorded Champ sightings, and to George Zug, Clive Cussler, Robin Holmes, and Martin Klein for their advice in proper use of side-scan sonar and ROV technology.

The 1987 LCPI fieldwork was undoubtedly the most technologically advanced of any previous LCPI directed expedition. Fieldwork consisted of: daytime surface surveillance from boat and shore using 35mm cameras, a Super 8mm camera, telephoto lenses, camera tripods, binoculars/telescope, surveillance camera/monitor, video recorder, and computer with digitizer; nocturnal surface surveillance using a hand-held night-scope; scuba monitoring; scuba diver underwater photography and videography; side-scan sonar; and use of the ROV.

Lake surface surveillance was conducted primarily from Kimball Dock Pier, Vermont. Numerous surface surveillance sessions were carried out from boat. Side-scan sonar sweeps and underwater videography using the ROV were conducted from the *Neptune Star*.

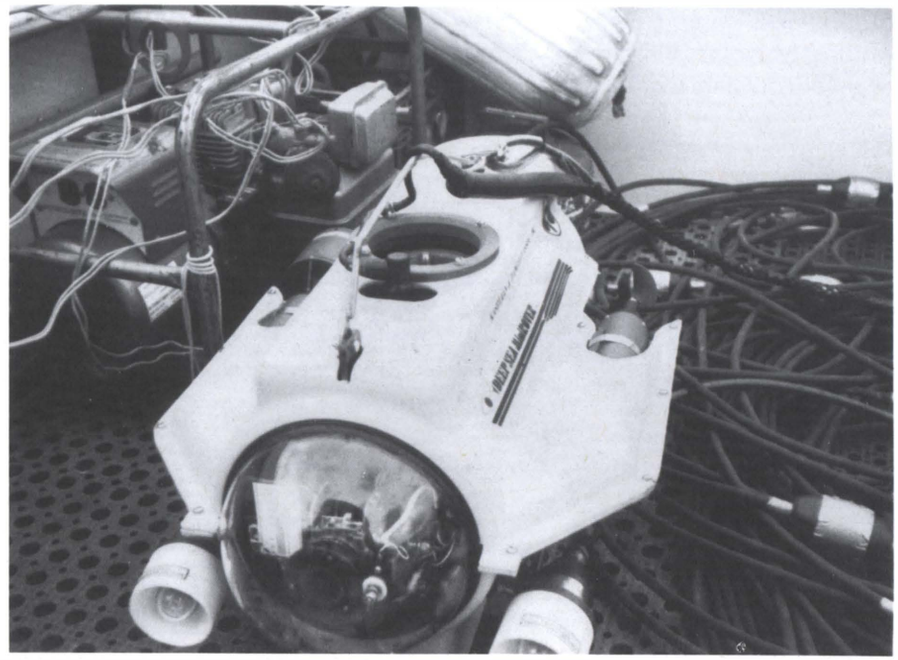

FIG. 1.—The underwater robot ROV (Remotely Operated Vehicle) deployed at Lake Champlain in 1987. It is equipped with a VHS video camera, a manipulator arm for object retrieval, and a 500-foot-long umbilical cable capable of reaching any depth in the lake.

The dates of the fieldwork were: April 11; June 25–30; July 1–3, 15, 18, 26–27; August 1–14, 18; October 3. Daytime surface surveillance from shore sites or boat using cameras and binoculars/telescope was conducted during all 30 days; nocturnal surface surveillance from a shore site using a night-scope was done during one night; boat-deployed side-scan sonar was used during six days; the ROV deployed from a boat was used during five days; and 17 scuba dives were conducted, nine with a diver using a Nikonos underwater camera, two with a diver using an underwater video camera, and three with a diver/divers working with the ROV.

The 17 scuba dives were made as part of an underwater reconnaissance survey, to inspect the ROV, or to examine side-scan sonar targets. The dates of these scuba dives, the divers involved, and the type of dive were: June 25 (Meaney, Zarzynski; search dive), June 26 (Mayland; inspect ROV), July 1 (Meaney, Zarzynski; search dive), July 2 (two dives: Mayland, Meaney, Zarzynski; search dives), July 15 (two dives: Bellico, Zarzynski; search dives), July 26 (two dives: Bellico, Zarzynski; search dives), August 2 (Zarzynski; search dive), August 8 (Capone, Pastor; examine side-scan sonar targets/ inspect ROV), August 9 (D'Angelo, Pastor; examine side-scan sonar targets/

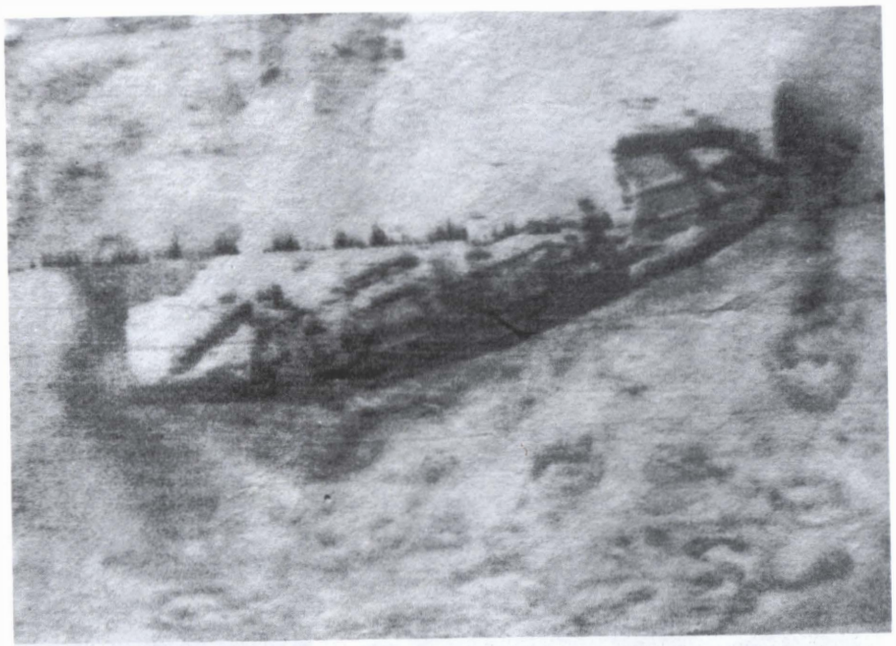

FIG. 2.—Underwater wreck, probably of the tugboat *William McAllister,* discovered in 150 feet of water during side-scan sonar survey on August 7, 1987.

inspect ROV), August 12 (two dives: Bellico, Zarzynski; search dives), August 13 (Meaney, Zarzynski; search dive), and August 18 (two dives: Bellico, Couture, Sullivan, Zarzynski; search dives).

RESULTS

LCPI personnel reported no visual sightings of Champ during the 1987 fieldwork. However, on June 28, the LCPI team (during Project Champ Carcass, a six-day side-scan sonar/ROV Champ carcass search) observed two deer in the lake, swimming from Schuyler Island west toward the New York shore. In my 14 years of work at Lake Champlain, this is the first time I have observed deer swimming in the lake.

On August 7, the LCPI team, while searching for a Champ carcass, discovered a shipwreck lying in approximately 150 feet of water during a side-scan sonar survey off Schuyler Island (Fig. 2). Garry Kozak, our side-scan sonar operator, interpreted the sonar target as the wreck of a tugboat. Follow-up research has uncovered that the wreck is probably the tugboat *William McAllister* that went down in the lake in November, 1963. The appropriate authorities have been notified of the discovery of its location. Also, our side-scan sonar survey noted several deep water targets lying on the lake bottom that deserve investigation by the ROV. Although probably geological features or sunken trees, the targets correspond to the size dimensions attributed to Champ.

The LCPI was able to uncover two more 1986 eyewitness sightings not included in last year's report (Joseph W. Zarzynski, 1986, LCPI Work at Lake Champlain, 1986, *Cryptozoology,* Vol. 5: 77–80). This brings the number of 1986 Champ sightings to 13. These two previously unrecorded sightings are: 1) August 31, 1986: David Christensen; from boat located between Willsboro Point, New York, and Four Brothers Islands; 5:30 p.m.; clear weather, very calm lake surface; "it looked like a snake standing on the water"; a 5-foot long neck, greyish-black in color; 2) June 3, 1986: Barbara Fortune; Clay Point area, near Colchester, Vermont; about 5:00 p.m.; calm water surface; sunny; 3 to 4 dark humps undulating, some splashing.

The seven 1987 Champ sightings uncovered to date by LCPI are listed below in chronological order (Fig. 3):

—April 25, 1987: Lennie French; off Barber Point, near Westport, New York; 3:00 p.m.; lake was mirror-calm; two humps about 1½ to 2 feet high; greyish green-brown in color.

—June 23, 1987: Cedric E. Haskins; Keeler's Bay, South Hero, Vermont; 5:00 p.m.; range, about 200 feet; "very calm, bay was like glass"; head/neck seen; "between black and very dark brown" in color; head was "angular and sharp-snouted."

—June 17, 1987: Dwight Burnham and wife; near Crown Point bridge; 6:15 a.m.; observed 10–15-foot-long dark object on the surface.

—July 4, 1987: Kathy Allmon Goodrich and husband; Basin Harbor, Vermont; no time or weather information provided; while canoeing; animal with two distinct humps; a third hump just breaking water; about 40–50 feet in front of canoe; dark in color.

—July 26, 1987: Alison, James, Lauren, and Nicky Murphy with Richard Cowperthwait; south of Kimball Dock, Vermont; 8:00 p.m.; range, ½ mile; calm lake surface; "a dark, sinuous object about 18 feet in length moving through the water"; 3–4 humps (Alison and James Murphy claim they saw a head, described as being flat and dark).

—September 12, 1987: Marilynne and Brent Holden; Treadwell Bay, New York; 4:00 p.m.; range, 24 feet; lake "almost calm, some slight chop"; described as "a young specimen of the species"; "no distinguishable head"; black, dull (not shiny) in color; only 3 feet of animal visible; 2 humps; several photographs taken by Marilynne Holden using a Canon AE1 camera with 85–205mm lense.

—September 13, 1987: Marilynne and Brent Holden and Irene and Bob

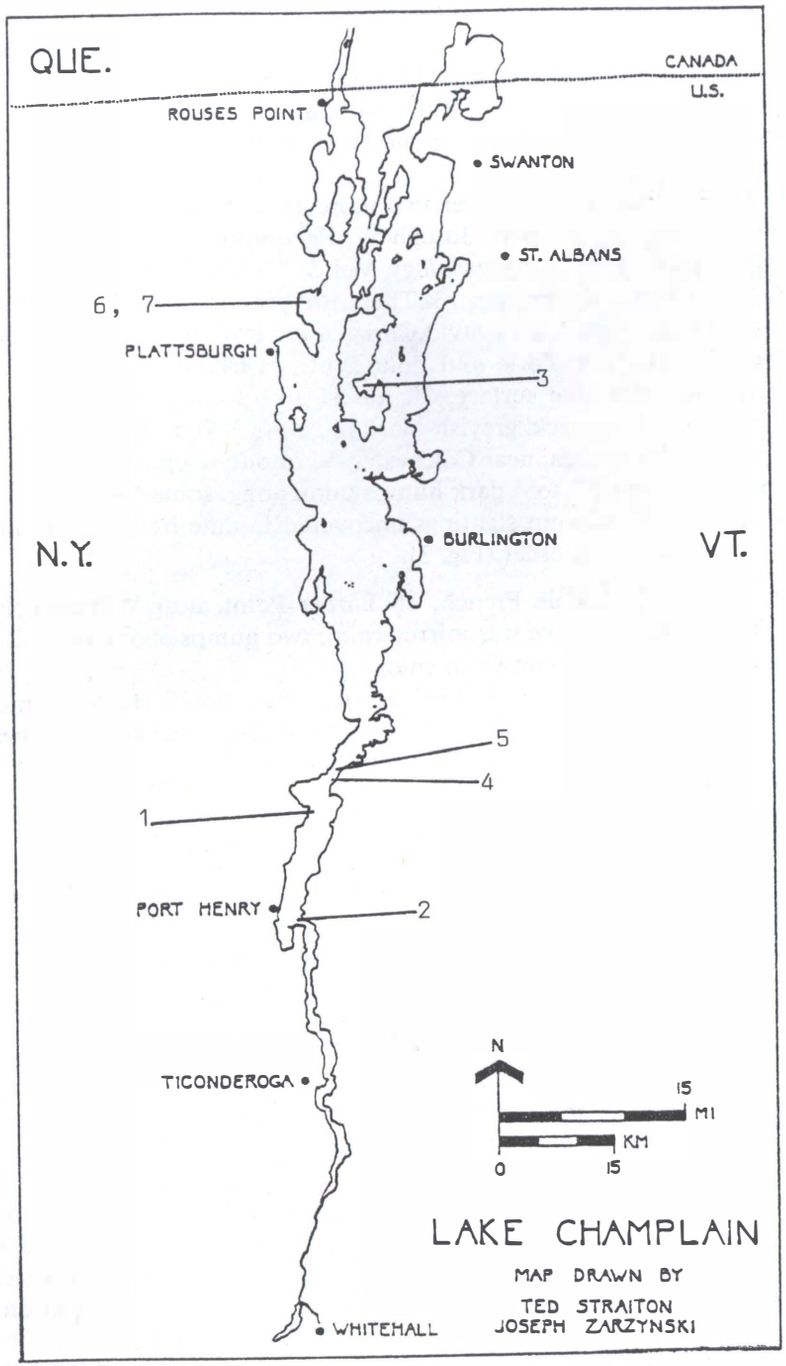

FIG. 3.—Map of Lake Champlain, with numbers indicating the locations of the 7 eyewitness sightings logged by LCPI during 1987.

Sinclair; Treadwell Bay, New York; 4:15 p.m.; believed they saw the same animal as on September 12; proposed the animal may be feeding in the shallows at end of their dock.

FUTURE PLANS

The LCPI will continue its fieldwork at Lake Champlain during 1988, with an increased emphasis on underwater searching. This year's participants have already committed themselves to a continuation of Project Champ Carcass and other LCPI activities. Next year's fieldwork will include use of the ROV examining deepwater rocky dropoffs—underwater terrain that might conceivably snag and hold a Champ carcass. Further side-scan sonar surveying will be conducted in search of targets that might be of a Champ carcass. Those targets will be noted by Loran C, and then eyeballed using scuba divers or the ROV. Several such targets from the 1987 side-scan sonar work will be examined by divers or the ROV. John Becker will continue experimenting with a video digitizer monitoring system. Next year will also see an underwater surveillance camera used to test this system. Vincent Capone, working with LCPI data, plans to complete a computer study on known Champ sighting events, which could assist cryptozoologists in future fieldwork strategy.

This increased effort in underwater searching could ultimately lead to the definitive evidence required for Champ—a carcass. Although LCPI does not advocate the harming or killing of these unknown animals, it believes that, by securing a Champ carcass, a major step would be taken leading to Champ's formal recognition, which would ensure protection for the species.